

DID KERRY'S "IMPOSSIBLE" DIPLOMATIC DEMAND JUST GET MET? UPDATE: NOW POSSIBLE?

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Okay, this is breaking very rapidly and could turn out to be nothing, but it is amazing and would even be hilarious if it weren't for the huge number of innocent lives that are at stake. As we learn from the New York Times this morning, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is making one last push for diplomacy in the face of an Obama administration that is determined to carry out military strikes against Syria:

The appalling suffering in Syria "cries out for international action," Navi Pillay, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights said on Monday in a speech in Geneva. Employing chemical weapons was "one of the gravest crimes that can be committed" and their use in Syria "seems to be in little doubt," even if the circumstances and the party responsible remained to be clarified, Ms. Pillay said.

While the United States is calling for a limited punitive strike to punish the Syrian government, Ms. Pillay warned that "a military response or the continued supply of arms risk igniting a regional conflagration, possibly resulting in many more deaths and even more widespread misery."

Ms. Pillay chastised the international community for being "late, very late" in

acting to stop the violence in Syria that has killed more than 100,000 people. “This is no time for powerful states to continue to disagree on the way forward or for geopolitical interests to override the legal and moral obligation to save lives by bringing this conflict to an end,” she said.

In a rational world, one would expect the chief diplomat from the United States to be somewhat chastised by such strong language and to voice a new commitment to finding a peaceful solution to the problem. But this is the Obama administration we are talking about, and so John Kerry instead chose to make a statement that appears to mock calls for diplomacy. He states conditions which Syria could meet in order to avoid an attack but then immediately follows by stating that it would be impossible for Syria to meet those conditions:

When asked by a reporter whether there was anything Assad’s government could do or offer to stop any attack, Kerry said:

“Sure, he could turn over every single bit of his chemical weapons to the international community in the next week – turn it over, all of it without delay and allow the full and total accounting (of it) but he isn’t about to do it and it can’t be done.”

Oh my. That is cold and beyond cynical. But it appears that Syria may well be calling Kerry’s bluff:

Syria is ready to hand over its chemical weapons into UN control.

– Lakhdar Brahimi (@BrahimiUN) September 9, 2013

Wow. If the twitter account from which this came

is real and if the offer is real, Kerry and the rest of the Obama administration will be facing a real conundrum. Kerry's flip identification of an "impossible" condition which Syria could meet to avoid an attack may well have done the impossible. Stay tuned. Today could be very interesting.

Update: Twitter consensus is developing around the Brahimi twitter account being fake. There are also suggestions the State Department is doing some "walking back" of Kerry's cynical statement.

Update: And as noted by commenter Erich Kuerschner, the twitter account has now been suspended. Even though the account was fake, it did a wonderful job of pointing out the horrible cynicism of Kerry's "diplomacy". What if Syria does offer up its chemical weapons? How is it Kerry's job to pronounce that such a process is "impossible"?

Yet Another Update: It would appear that Putin appreciates the beauty of calling Kerry's bluff:

BREAKING: Russian FM: Moscow will push Syria to place its chemical weapons under international control.

– The Associated Press (@AP) September 9, 2013

And that's AP (unless they've been hacked again...)

Update: New York Times:

Syria's foreign minister says his country welcomes Russia's proposal for it to place its chemical weapons under international control and then dismantle them quickly to avert United States strikes.